



Arlington Historic District Commissions Final & Approved Minutes

Date: October 24, 2019

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: Whittemore Robbins House, 670R Mass. Ave., Arlington MA

Commissioners Present: N. Aikenhead, M. Audin, D. Baldwin, C. Barry,
M. Bush arrived at 845pm, B. Cohen, C. Hamilton, S. Makowka
C. Tee, J. Worden

Guests: S. Shaloo, K. Lubar, H. Baiser, D. Green, D. Tee, J. Miller,
H. Colquhoun, R. Murray, D. Bean, T. Taketomo, T. Smurzynski, R.
Smurzynski, H. Berber, M. Wilke

1. AHDC Meeting Opens 8:00pm
2. Appointment of alternate Commissioners:

Pleasant Street: C. Hamilton; Russell Street: B. Cohen; Jason/Gray: M. Bush
3. Approval of draft minutes from August 22 and September 26, 2019
D. Baldwin moved approval of the minutes, seconded by 8/22. Unanimous approval. D. Baldwin moved approval of the 9/26 minutes with J. Worden changes, seconded by C. Tee. Unanimous approval.
4. COMMUNICATIONS

See Attached List

S. Makowka added that there have been a number of calls on 221 Pleasant Street and discussion and discussion amongst commissioners about the property needing rehab and maintenance and support someone for sympathetic renovations to the structure.

S. Makowka received call from architects at Central School and he forwarded them on to the monitor, B. Cohen for follow up. J. Worden added that he had concerns on railings and suggested they come by his house to see what he would think is appropriate.

B. Cohen talked with realtor from 221 Pleasant Street also

5. OPEN FORUM
Ordinarily, any matter presented to the Commission under Open Forum will neither be acted upon nor a formal decision made, absent a previously noticed agenda item, but the Commission may make a decision if it deems it appropriate and necessary for the public good.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Central Street and Avon Place Historic District vacant commissioner seats - No Update
- b. Report from Streetscape sub-committee - No report
- c. Modification of Design Guidelines for Fiberglass Gutter eligibility for a CONA - No Update

7. NEW BUSINESS

8:00pm

- a. Formal Hearing re: 11A Academy Street (Frye) for chimney cap installation. Owners have been struggling to get building into decent shape. Chimney was a problem and required mortar work. Requested antennae removal. Wanted to put chimney cap on but was denied installation. Recently had a squirrel in the house that came in from the chimney and they want a chimney cap installed to eliminate any other entry from outside animals.

S. Makowka clarified that the chimney cap was never denied but there was a request for a CONA which the addition of a chimney cap did not qualify for. Tonight's application is for a COA. M. Audin suggested a copper one would blend in better. Applicant said a copper one isn't what they are asking to install. B. Cohen said she's ok with black. B. Cohen moved approval as proposed to be black or made of copper, with final approval by monitor prior to installation. Seconded by C Tee. All voted in favor Monitor appointed: C Barry.

- b. Formal Hearing re: 12 Elder Terrace (Silverman) for reconstruction of garage Continued to November 21st meeting at applicant's request
- c. Formal Hearing re: 9 Ravine Street (Smurzynski) for a/c and conduit installation. T. Smurzynski presented the plan for mini splits to be mounted high in the inside front wall with lines going down the exterior to the ground unit compressor. Utilities subsidize about 30% of the cost for installation. The original application has been supplemented with additional documentation which should be added to the final revised application. The proposal is to locate the compressor in a recess of the front of the house. The unit will stand about 5 feet high and will be installed with narrow side towards street. Looking up from the street at the house which is a distance so won't have a huge impact on the visibility of the house. The interior units can only go towards the front wall of the house which requires a conduit coming down the front exterior of the house. They plan to paint the conduit to help it disappear into the façade of the house.

J. Worden asked why the conduit can't be hidden inside the walls. Commissioners' preference would be not to see the units in front of the house. T. Smurzynski thinks it may be feasible for them to do the exterior unit on the side of the house behind the corner bay window. S. Makowka asked about the band on the house and how you will deal going over it with the conduit. No groove would be allowed – it would just bump out over it and be painted out. M. Wilke from Russell Street district added that he finds window a/c's more visually offensive than having the compressor visible. C. Barry said he is troubled by the conduit coming down the front of the house. T. Smurzynski argued that this is visible like a 4" downspout and we allow that in Districts on the front of the house. N. Aikenhead said it can go inside the wall.

Applicant said she wants it outside and not inside the wall. M. Audin said applicant is in a HD and there is sometime a burden to do what is appropriate.

A suggestion was made that the conduit run up the side wall of the house to the attic and run across inside to the side of the building and then down. S. Makowka suggested they approve the conduit and the compressors on the side of the house, but not as proposed on the front of the house. S. Makowka moved approval subject that exterior compressor be installed on left hand side of house behind bay window or on the rear and with piping to be either embedded inside wall or run up vertically on side of wall of the house behind the bay. C. Barry seconded for discussion. M. Audin added that the condenser should be placed as close as possible to the house.

Discussion that behind the bay window will make it almost invisible. S. Makowka amended motion to include M. Audin suggestion, seconded by C. Barry. Unanimous approval. Monitor appointed B. Cohen. (M. Bush arrived at this point – 8:45pm)

- d. Formal Hearing re: 21-23 Russell Terrace (Nyberg) for driveway expansion and retaining walls. J. Nyberg gave presentation. He informed the Commission that they have decided to restore the original windows instead of trying to replace them as discussed in a prior application. For the current application, he explained that there is no access to back yard. Before houses built behind the owner owned the land and that was how the access was provided to the back yard. The current arrangement was never a safe parking setup. Pictures presented showing existing conditions. Streetscape shows no parking in front of other houses. Everyone has driveways and rear parking on photos shown. Over time this property got stuck with no parking. The lot is a little over 10,000sf. Most others are around 8200sf. W. Rolland, architect talked about their proposed design which has not been fully engineered yet. Cost of driveway is about \$150k.

S. Makowka asked if access via the rear alley way would work – discussion whether the neighbors would be willing to grant an easement through that alley to the property. Applicant had not entertained the idea. M. Audin said he wants to see a civil engineer stamp before he would be willing to approve these plans. Discussion about the driveway and guardrail requirements. 18” of stone going up and then another railing for pedestrian protection. Discussion that the civil engineer will need to be heavily involved. C. Hamilton asked about the big drop from sidewalk level to grass – 12’ drop that exists today. D. Baldwin it looks like a real wide roadway at 15’ but could it be less than 15. C. Barry said the transitions will factor in on this decision. Concern about bottoming out at the top and the bottom for low riding autos. Concerned about where headlights will point. C. Barry said it would be good to show drainage structures and the plan for what they will look like – the materials used in the drawings make it feel like a highway entrance ramp. B. Cohen said she has drainage issue concerns. What are grates going to look like, etc. M. Audin said before he can review it he needs to be sure it is on solid engineering ground. S. Makowka said its worth discussing option on using alley. J. Worden commented before we put in a massive ramp we should be sure the possibility of negotiating a deal on the rights of the alley way would make a lot more sense.

S. Makowka noted Commission did receive an email from Susan McCabe, an abutter and will be added to record. Second email from M. Wilke, abutter also received and will be added to the record. M. Bush suggested an elevator might be feasible. S. Makowka asked for comments from the public. M. Wilke, 22

Prescott St (directly behind property) and he has lived there a long time. He explained that the prior owner of this property never had parking access. When the prior owner purchased a second property behind (fronting Prescott St) he started using the rear lot to bring equipment. He strongly suggests the commission consider parking at the street level. A. Max, 18 Prescott Street owner, is concerned about snow removal, where will plows leave snow and headlight directions. From Prescott Street the house is very visible – the ramp from below is going to be very visually distinctive, drawing your eye. Drainage is also a huge concern, he doesn't want a river coming down the ramp onto his house. Applicant asked what we mean by "industrial looking" grating. T. Taketomo said an outdoor ramp more than 8% is not recommended. He thinks you're going to probably need blends. He thinks the other solutions – keeping at grade on top seems much more likely to work for you. The setback for cars might be granted a special permit from zoning. S. Makowka asked Applicant to explore: 1) Access through existing right of way, 2) new plan presented tonight (parking area at street level) and 3) modifications to ramp (engineering) to see if it is feasible. Hearing continued to next month.

- e. Continuation of Formal Hearing for 0 Ravine Street (Perlo) for new house construction. S. Makowka noted that the absent Commissioners from last month watched the video recording of last month's hearing. Tonight everyone at table is eligible to participate and S. Makowka is recusing himself and having C. Barry appointed to Commission for voting purposes.

M. Penzenik said she will touch on some things that have repeatedly come up as a concern to people and that is pretty much data. Paper with footprint and gross floor area handed out. Based on data on town assessor's website. Side yard setbacks (page

4) displayed. No question that new house is going to have smaller setbacks than some houses on diagram, however, not uncommon or small relative to entire District. Having said that they moved on to the present a model of the proposed house and adjacent houses. She confirmed that the representational wood houses are proportional from public record dimensions. They are concerned about having the house fit in the neighborhood and not look like an infill or builder development house. The Shaloo house (to the right) has a lot of enriching details on the outside, some others are not as ornamental.

S. Makowka asked for removal of proposed house from the model to see the sight lines. D. Baldwin said infill houses (54 Jason) used in dimensions handout aren't really indicative of District. Discussion about use of accessory structures in spacing comparisons. C. Barry said comment about mass of the structure is one of the most important things. Distance between major houses is a very strong characteristic on Ravine Street. Building something on this lot could work if scale were sufficiently reduced so smaller setbacks worked to overall proportional of existing street. {Aside:

S. Makowka asked for name of model builder for future reference. M Penzenik said Eric Seleine from Westminster Ave. made the model.] M. Audin wants photos of the model included in the record in order to consider it. C. Hamilton said that if you remove the proposed house the neighborhood is dramatically different. The open expanse continues right across the street. The lots are big and the houses are impressive and we are changing entire streetscape to put something in there now. N. Aikenhead asked what number is for 0 Ravine for gross square footage. M. Penzenik said pg. 9 and 10 have answers. e.g. – 8 Ravine, 400sf is front porch. 4,970 is total of everything added up. S. Makowka said the numbers on square footage are useful to have, but the relative importance is for each Commissioner to determine. S. Makowka gave a sheet

of his own calculations with he sees as a representative measure of what is visually impacting the visual massing of the house. His data include lot and 1st floor and front porches areas for structures taken from town building cards.

M. Penzenik said she feels it should be substantive and not feel like an infill house. J. Worden said he would say that this house nicely presented in these models perhaps should be built somewhere, but not here. He feels you need a smaller, barn-like, carriage house building on this spot if you have to have something there. S. Makowka said distance between proposed house and house to right is 34' from porch and 24' on other side. The current proposed house is only slightly smaller (not dramatically smaller) than the one previously denied so may be useful to go back and look at prior denial reasons and current proposal. Median value of side setback between structures in the area is 141' (adding both sides together). Side setback of proposed structure is close to 60' which is exactly same side setbacks of the house we denied before – this is a tight fit. Coverage of house itself of this proposed structure is greater than the average of the area. The prior Denial emphasized the streetscape description about these two streets in the District Report that formed the District. Visualization materials provided by the Applicant (referred to sheet 1 and 2), shows that having a house of that size breaks up the existing rhythm of that side of the street and of Ravine Street. Regarding blocking of sightlines along driveway to 24 Irving St, visual representation on sheet 5 are useful. The existing triangle showing visibility of 24 Irving from Ravine extends from in front of Shaloo house and see until end of purple triangle. Now, with the proposed house, you would only have about 5% of existing view shed. This strikes as a much smaller number than 100%, that is, there is a dramatic change in the visibility of existing structures caused by building this structure as proposed. This proposed structure continues to block the view, a condition listed in the prior denial.

He expressed that something smaller and setback would yield a bigger number (don't know what number is) but more than 5% visibility. He continued that this space was initially part of the Hardy compound which preserved the spacing of the area, which in his opinion was part of the historical context.

C. Tee said this area has long been known to have large property lots with significant houses on the lots and to put something of this size on a much smaller lot alters that in a great way. Someone commented before that not much context to other houses on Ravine has been given. M. Penzenik said in the past the Commission has pushed for lowering gross sq. footage. They are trying to develop a house that is nice living space, not too small rooms, not a big presence on the street. Under 1400sf footprint and massing broken down.

M. Audin suggested that pulling volume down and perception of volume being pulled down needs to happen. Houses that have cross gables are always down from peak – principle gable and then secondary and then tertiary gables. The cross gables should be lowered. The ridge needs to come down. Primary gable then other gables are down. Get it parallel to the street. There's a bay sticking out the front and they in turn are a significant aspect of the house.

S. Makowka invited comments from the public. S. Shaloo said she hopes everyone has gone to the neighborhood and walked the area. There will be an alley way made by the driveway. She wishes there had been conversation after the last denial and maybe that would have brought us a different proposed house. D. Green said he shares his

neighbor's concerns. He has an issue with lot ratios – the streetscape is a broader construct than the ratio of what these lot lines happen to be. H. Berber (24 Irving) echoed the last 2 people and now she is in a landlocked house and worries about emergency vehicles accessing the house. R. Smurzynski said she sent a memo to the Commission based on the Jason/Gray report and this feels untenable to her based on what the report said --- the report said that when you are putting a house into a neighborhood that is historic it has to have the massing and the spacing. K. Lubar said there is some house that would work, but no one has talked with the neighbors.

Something smaller that could work. T. Taketomo said he is very interested in the fairness of the process. There is an issue of financial fairness to the Perlos. People quote various things about history – what could be on that site that is a full-sized house and be acceptable. He's talking about maintaining the historical quality of the fabric of the neighborhood. A point was made that the view of the property is important – what criteria is being used – not consistent. You need to say more of what can be allowed to help the architect and the owner to design something that will be approved. Go to Hillsdale Ave in Cambridge and see the houses there to understand what he is saying.

S. Makowka summarized his sense of the Commission as being concerned with the size of the proposed structure given the context of this site. The Commission suggested that they explore options that were smaller and more consistent with a secondary structure that might be a better fit. M. Penzenik reiterated her opinion that a smaller structure would not be appropriate on the site. S. Makowka suggested and J. Leone agreed to continue the hearing.

8. REVIEW OF PROJECTS

9. MEETING ADJOURNS – Adjourned at 11:30pm

10. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, November 21, 2019 (1 week early due to

Thanksgiving) Reviewing Commissioner for November Formal Hearings – M. Bush